

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
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TRSE-00 CU-02 /084 W
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R 021120Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5026
INFO AMCONSUL FLORENCE
AMCONSUL GENOA
AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL NAPLES
AMCONSUL PALERMO
AMCONSUL TURIN
AMCONSUL TRIESTE

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJECT: OVERVIEW OF AMBASSADOR'S NORTHERN ITALIAN TRIP

1. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY. ROME IS NOT ITALY. THIS FACT WAS BROUGHT HOME FORCEFULLY WHEN I LEFT THE CAPITAL ON MAY 15 FOR A WEEK-LONG TOUR OF NORTHERN ITALY. ECONOMICALLY, THE AREAS I VISITED ARE AMONG THE MOST PROSPEROUS IN ITALY. WHEREVER I WENT, MY ITALIAN HOSTS DID THEIR BEST TO PRESENT THE BEST SIDE OF THE SITUATION, AND THEREFORE THE IMPRESSIONS THEY GAVE ME MAY BE OVERLY OPTIMISTIC, ESPECIALLY FOR THE COUNTRY AS A WHOLE. NEVERTHELESS, AS I SPOKE WITH ITALIANS FROM MANY WALKS OF LIFE, I REALIZED THAT ITALY DISPOSES OF THE POTENTIAL STRENGTH, RESILIENCE AND TALENT NECESSARY TO EMERGE FROM ITS CURRENT TROUBLES. THE CATASTROPHIC PREDICTIONS WE OFTEN HEAR IN POLITICAL ROME DO NOT COME SO EASILY IN THE NORTH. THERE, ONE FINDS HOPE BASED ON

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STILL-HEALTHY SECTORS OF INDUSTRY AND A FORWARD-LOOKING SPIRIT. JUST AS IMPORTANT FOR THE US, I DETECTED EVERYWHERE A CONSIDERABLE RESERVIOR OF GOODWILL FOR THE US. THE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS OF THE RECENT PAST HAVE NOT YET CHANGED THE ITALIANS' WESTERN ORIENTATION. THEY HAVE GREETED THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION WITH GENUINE HAPPINESS AND GREAT EXPECTATION. THEY LOOK TO THE US FOR LEADER-

SHIP, AND ARE READY TO CHEER OUR PERFORMANCE IN THAT ROLE. AT THE SAME TIME, I ALSO FOUND THAT ITALIANS, EVEN OTHERWISE WELL-INFORMED ONES, GENERALLY DO NOT FULLY UNDERSTAND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CARTER PRESIDENCY, ESPECIALLY IN TERMS OF VITAL WORLD ISSUES SUCH AS ENERGY AND ECONOMIC QUESTIONS. ITALIANS RECOGNIZE THESE GAPS IN THEIR INFORMATION, AND WANT URGENTLY TO FILL THEM. THESE ARE THE GENERAL PERCEPTIONS THAT EMERGED. EACH REGION AND CITY WHICH I VISITED HAD ITS OWN INDIVIDUAL CHARACTER, AND FEW ILLUSTRATIVE OBSERVATIONS WILL PROVIDE AN OVERVIEW OF THE TOUR. END SUMMARY.

2. MILAN, MY FIRST STOP, IS A PROUD AND POWERFUL CITY THAT IS MODERN IN EVERY SENSE OF THE WORD. THERE, AS ONE LEADING YOUNG INDUSTRIALIST TOLD ME, IT IS "STILL POSSIBLE TO DO BUSINESS." IN THE POSITIVE MILANESE OPTIC, THE POLITICAL SITUATION IS PREOCCUPYING, BUT MOST OBSERVERS ARE CONFIDENT THAT A DEMOCRATIC SOLUTION CAN BE FOUND. THE PROBLEM OF VIOLENCE IS SEEN AS MUCH MORE THREATENING. MOST OF THE ESTABLISHMENT FIGURES WITH WHOM I SPOKE CONFESSED AN INABILITY TO UNDERSTAND THE ROOTS OF THE RECENT VIOLENCE. LACK OF OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUTH EXPLAINS SOME, NOT NOT ALL, OF THE TROUBLES.

3. TURIN, I FOUND, IS A LITTLE LESS SURE OF ITSELF AND EVEN MORE FRIGHTENED THAN MILAN BY THE VIOLENT FACTS OF RECENT WEEKS. AS THE PREFECT SIMPLY PUT IT, PEOPLE IN TURIN "LIVE IN FEAR." WITH MILAN, TURIN SHARES A LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DEGREE OF GUARDED OPTIMISM ON THE ECONOMIC FUTURE. THE COMMUNISTS AND SOCIALIST OFFICIALS WHO GREETED ME IN TURIN WERE FRIENDLY, BUT THEIR POLITICAL APPROACH HAD A HARDER LEFTIST EDGE THAN I ENCOUNTERED ELSEWHERE. AT THE SAME TIME, MANY EVINced AN APPARENTLY SINCERE DESIRE TO EXPAND THEIR ADMITTEDLY NARROW BASE OF KNOWLEDGE OF THE US.

4. THE GENOESE, WHOM I ENCOUNTERED ON MY THIRD STOP, LIVED UP TO THEIR SERIOUS AND BUSINESSLIKE REPUTATION. CIVIC LEADERS THERE ARE MOVING WITH SOBER EFFICIENCY TO PRESERVE THEIR ANCIENT PORT CITY'S ROLE AS A WINDOW ON THE WORLD FOR ITALY. IT SEEMED TO BE A CITY OF CONVINCED EUROPEANS. EVERYWHERE, I ENCOUNTERED SINCERE WARMTH AND THE DESIRE TO STRENGTHEN TIES OF FRIENDSHIP WITH THE US. THE DEEP INTEREST SHOWN BY MY INTERLOCUTORS IN ISSUES SUCH AS ENERGY, THE ENVIRONMENT, LAW OF THE SEA AND DISARMAMENT ELOQUENTLY PUT THE CASE FOR A GREATLY EXPANDED US CULTURAL AND INFORMATION PRESENCE IN THIS KEY COUNTRY.

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5. MOVING FROM NORTHWEST TO NORTHEAST, I CONCLUDED MY TRIP WITH A VISIT TO THE EARTHQUAKE-STRICKEN AREA OF FRIULI AND A STAY IN TRIESTE. A VIEW OF THE EARTHQUAKE ZONE FROM THE AIR LEFT NO DOUBT ABOUT THE EXTENT BOTH OF THE TRAGEDY AND OF THE SUCCESSFUL RESPONSE OF THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT AT ALL LEVELS TO THE CHALLENGE OF RECONSTRUCTION. ON THE GROUND, I ENCOUNTERED REMARKABLE DETERMINATION TO COMPLETE THE JOB OF REBUILDING AND GENUINE THANKFULNESS FOR THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ASSISTANCE WHICH THE US HAS GIVEN THUS FAR.

6. THE AFFECTION FOR THE US SO MANIFEST IN FRIULI CONTINUED IN TRIESTE, WHERE CIVIC LEADERS AND THE
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PUBLIC GAVE ME PERHAPS THE WARMEST WELCOME OF THE TRIP. CLEARLY, OUR DEMONSTRATED SOLIDARITY WITH THE VICTIMS OF THE EARTHQUAKE IS PRODUCING IMPORTANT BENEFITS. REGIONAL AND CITY OFFICIALS IN TRIESTE LOOK TO THE US FOR CONTINUED SOLIDARITY, NOT ONLY IN THE FACE OF NATURAL DISASTER, BUT ALSO IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT. A CITY CUT OFF FROM THE REST OF ITALY BY ITS PHYSICAL LOCATION, TRIESTE SEES ITSELF AS A BRIDGE TO THE EAST. THE TRIESTINI ARE INCREASING THE LEVEL OF THEIR COMMERCIAL, INTELLECTUAL AND POLITICAL EXCHANGES WITH NEIGHBORING YUGOSLAVIA, BUT THEY ARE VERY CONSCIOUS OF THEIR NEED FOR CONTINUED AMERICAN POLITICAL SUPPORT IN THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE. ACCORDINGLY, THEY WILL DO EVERYTHING IN THEIR POWER TO PRESERVE THE CONCRETE SYMBOLS OF THE US PRESENCE IN THEIR AREA OF THE COUNTRY.

7. CONCLUSION. THE TRIP, FAST-PACED AND INTENSE, TOLD ME MUCH ABOUT ITALY. THE MOST IMPORTANT LESSON, REPEATED WITH DIFFERENT ACCENTS AND VARIATIONS AT EVERY STEP ALONG THE WAY, IS THAT THE US NOW HAS A UNIQUE AND PERHAPS CRUCIAL OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT AMERICA AND THINGS AMERICAN TO A RECEPTIVE ITALIAN AUDIENCE. ITALIANS BELIEVE THAT AMERICA TODAY REPRESENTS SOMETHING FRESH AND NEW, THE BEST OF THE WESTERN TRADITION. SEIZED AS THEY PRESENTLY ARE WITH THE CHOICE BETWEEN TWO DIFFERENT VALUE SYSTEMS, THEY WANT (AND KNOW THEY NEED) TO LEARN MORE ABOUT US. THIS SITUATION PRESENTS OUR ITALIAN CONSTITUENT POSTS WITH THE CHALLENGE OF PLAYING CRUCIAL ROLES IN THE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, CULTURAL AND INFORMATION AREAS. I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT THE PRESENT GROUP OF OUTSTANDING PRINCIPAL OFFICERS WILL RESPOND WITH IMAGINATION AND PROFESSIONAL SKILL. THEIR HEAVY TASK WILL UNFORTUNATELY BE FURTHER WEIGHTED WITH THE LEGACY OF PAST CUTBACKS IN STAFF, PARTICULARLY IN THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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INFORMATION AND CULTURAL AREAS. WITH EVERY OPPORTUNITY THAT WE MISS IN NORTHERN ITALY BECAUSE OF LACK OF RESOURCES, WE PAY THE PRICE FOR THOSE PAST REDUCTIONS. FOR THE FUTURE, WE MUST MANAGE OUR INFORMATION/CULTURAL ASSETS WISELY AND DO EVERYTHING WE CAN TO INCREASE OUR CAPABILITIES IN THESE AREAS. GARDNER

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